



"It's a boat with the attributes of an aluminium hull that aren't recognisable when you're on the water in it"



Savage 515 Beachcomber

This aluminium-'glass hybrid has given the tinnie the makeover it deserves



THIS PHOTO: All the attributes of an aluminium boat with the class of 'glass'.
BELOW RIGHT: The combination of rolled side decks and a 'glass windscreen and bow lounge moulding improve the Beachcomber's overall look.

WHILE HARDLY a hardcore fishing boat, Savage's 515 Beachcomber is nonetheless the kind of boat a lot of us buy. Fishing families especially. That's people who fish, but also see their boat as a getaway machine that'll see plenty of time on the water just doing what boats do best: sitting there and soaking up sun. This broad description can entail cruising; taxiing to a beach somewhere; towing wake toys; anchoring for lunch; and as much fishing as suits the occasion.

Our national mania for aluminium boats makes sense sometimes, and what's interesting about that in relation to our test boat is that it takes one of an aluminium boat's drawbacks head-on and deals with it. This is that, aesthetically, the average tinnie isn't the best-finished boat on the lot.

Many people don't like to see the visible joints, exposed welds and all the other unavoidable signs that production aluminium boats are assembled rather than built.

What Savage's 515 Beachcomber does to address this is simple. It has an upper-deck mould which incorporates the windscreen base, the dashboard area and the bow

lounge area. The side decks are still aluminium, however some neat rolling of the inner edges ensures an aesthetically pleasing finish to the rest of what's visible to the boat's occupants. It's a boat with attributes of an aluminium hull that aren't really recognisable when you're enjoying a day on the water in it.

This sense of neatness is further developed by an upholstery job that's on the plush side compared to the plain fare usually dished up in tinnies. At least, the helm and observer's bucket seats and bow lounge are plush—the foldaway aft lounge doesn't quite keep up the good work. It looks like an optional aft lounge in a tinnie, which, to be fair, is what it is, I suppose. At least it can be folded away whenever some serious fishing's on the agenda.

With the aft lounge stowed, you're left with a roomy and serviceable cockpit. In addition to which, the side seats in the bow lounge and the boards that keep gear stowed underfloor can be lifted out. This leaves more fishing space in the bows, with a level deck through the entire boat. There's no anchor well on the foredeck—it resides beneath the section of lounge left behind

when the side sections are removed. No problems there.

Of note was a low bow rail, which not only helps the boat look good but stays out of the way of someone fishing forward of the windscreen. At least three people can fish without getting in each other's way.

Aft, the 515 Beachcomber has a full-width, gunwale-height bulkhead. The transom door to port in our test boat is an option sure to be popular because it allows easy access onto the decking beside the outboard. With a transom door, the 515 Beachcomber's stern arrangement becomes more of an aft boarding deck than a motor mount.

The bimini shade top on our test boat is an option few families would do without. It stows inside a neat envelope, although even when folded away, it does get in the way somewhat when fishing. It's mounted with only four stainless steel bolts, so removing it altogether isn't too difficult, and that's as reasonable a compromise between the shade-versus-fishing-space conundrum as you'll find in a 5.1m boat.

Meanwhile, the 515 Beachcomber's size raises another point. At 5.1m long and over a metre in hull depth, this is a boat with some



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SAVAGE 515 BEACHCOMBER SPECS

RPM	SPEED (KNOTS)
1800	4.6
3000	13.3
3500	16.4
4000	21.7
4500	25.2
5000	29.2
5800 (LIMITER)	36.4

SPECIFICATIONS

Hull Length:	5.17m
LOA:	5.32m
Beam:	2.30m
Hull Weight:	506kg
BMT Total Length :	6.30m
BMT Total Height:	2.10m
Power during test:	90hp
Max Power:	100hp
Max Motor Weight:	200kg
Fuel:	70l
Max Persons:	6
Website:	www.savageboats.com.au
Price as Tested: \$39,840 (including options). Supplied by Wyld About Boats. Call (07) 5563 8833, or email hayden@daboutboats.com.au .	

open-water capabilities. However, when running any moderate-deadrise aluminium hull across the surface conditions encountered on big open bays and offshore, you need to be able to stand and use your legs to soak up the inevitable bumps and bangs. The helm in the 515 Beachcomber really isn't comfortable when standing—certainly not for the periods of time involved in crossing northern Moreton Bay, for example.

That's a shame, because it's a downside to this boat for the people it otherwise suits so well.



There's plenty of room for two to fish in the cockpit, although when things get serious most would remove the bimini—an easy enough task.

So, it's essentially a comfortable enclosed-water boat that's big enough to take virtually anything an estuary or small bay can dish out—in comfort. Around my stomping grounds it would make a great boat for the 'Pin and southern Moreton Bay. But it'd be a rare forecast that would encourage a trip out to Tangalooma... which still makes it an attractive proposition for a lot of people.

While on the downsides, I have to talk about an aspect of this boat that's not so much negative as some good advice for anyone buying one.

The 90hp Mercury Optimax outboard on our test boat proved a great match to the hull, with ample low and mid-range torque to run the boat economically when throttled back, and no lack of top-end speed, either. On flat water with only two adults aboard and running an 18in Vengeance prop, the Beachcomber hit the Merc's rev limiter easily at 36.4 knots.

That's nothing to complain about, though

I reckon there's another couple of knots available from a slightly bigger-pitch prop. The motor has the torque to swing one.

For a moderate-deadrise aluminium hull, the 515 Beachcomber handled well. Trimming in before tight turns is mandatory, as it is in almost every aluminium hull. This boat—aside from the fishing and family boating it suits so well—is eminently suited to family wake toy fun, too.

But when it came to tossing it around a bit, which you do when towing screaming laughing people on wake toys, our test boat was let down by its steering. Hydraulic steering should go straight on the options list.

Include hydraulic steering in your budget right from the start of negotiations and you'll enjoy your 515 Beachcomber the way it deserves to be enjoyed. Very much! **MF**

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